NYPL RESEARCH LIBRARIES
3 3433 07954864 4

A LAYMAN'S APOLOGY

GILBERT M. TUCKER

(Tucker)

A
LAYMAN'S APOLOGY

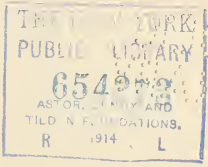
BY

GILBERT M. TUCKER

RICHARD G. BADGER
THE GORHAM PRESS
BOSTON

Copyright, 1913, by Gilbert M. Tucker

All Rights Reserved



The Gorham Press, Boston, U. S. A.

CONTENTS

PAGE

FOREWORD 3

I

THE ARGUMENT FROM LAW 11

II

A BOOK SUCCESS THAT NEEDS EXPLAINING . 47

III

ORTHODOXY AND NATURE 73

IV

CHRISTIANITY AND OTHER RELIGIONS . . . 115

PRIVATE
LIBRARY
OF THE
NEW YORK
PUBLIC

FOREWORD

THE writer of the following essays, though venturing to deal with questions involving both science and religion, is neither a savant nor a theologian, but emphatically a layman in both departments of study, laying no claim to authority as an expounder of either, and only endeavoring to correlate certain universally accepted truths that speak for themselves, and deduce from them their sometimes overlooked but strictly logical consequences. Conceiving that man's relations to his maker, if he has a maker, are of all objects of thought the most vitally important, the writer has sought to learn, from the conclusions of science and the teachings of alleged divine revelation, some of the ultimate words that each would speak to the attentive mind in regard to our origin and our duty; and has then endeavored to compare the teachings of the one with those of the other, by no means

laboriously to "reconcile" them, Procrustes-fashion or otherwise, but honestly to ascertain how far, if at all, they agree. This is of course the same thing as inquiring whether the alleged divine revelation can reasonably be accepted as such; for the settled conclusions of science (to be sharply distinguished from the guesses and assumptions of scientific men) no one who understands them can help but receive for truth, whatever may be his desire; and if any doctrine purporting to be divinely inspired is really at war with these conclusions, no sincere thinker can do otherwise than reject it. By "alleged divine revelation," are understood the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith. Considering that Christianity invariably triumphs over all her competitors when brought into equal combat, so that it is hardly to be conceived as possible that a sane man, rejecting the evidence that Christianity is from the Creator, could accept any other religion as divine, it is thought fair to take Christianity as the representative of all alleged divine revelations, and to presume that if her claims will not bear the

scrutiny of scientific examination, still less will those of her rivals.

The inquiry restricts itself therefore to the question whether the Christian faith can be reasonably accepted as fundamentally sound. Those who answer in the negative, at the present day at least, commonly do so, the writer thinks, on the ground that the teachings of the Bible are inconsistent with those of science. This science may be physical or moral. It may be argued that natural events do not occur as it is supposed that believers in Christianity are bound to maintain that they do; or it may be argued that the character of the Christian God, and his alleged dealings with his creatures, are irreconcilably repugnant to our conceptions of the highest goodness, and even of ordinary justice. If either opinion is well founded, Christianity is sure to be finally relegated to the limbo now tenanted by the forgotten superstitions of antiquity, and we might as well send it there immediately and be done with it. In fact we *ought* to send it there immediately, and rid mankind once for all of its erroneous teach-

ings and the burdens that it imposes. A faith that is based on falsehood, and that makes evil good and good evil, will surely on the whole work mischief, even though it embody, as probably all faiths embody, many elements of vital and important truth. These jewels, if there are such, will surely survive, and be the better appreciated in proportion as we brush away the rubbish that obscures their luster. If, however, Christianity is really from God, and the most serious objections to accepting its inculcations as divinely sanctioned arise from misconception or from a one-sided view that neglects essential features of the question, it is well to try to clarify the matter as far as one may; and these essays are intended as a contribution to that end, though certainly very far from constituting anything like a treatise on what are called the "Evidences of Christianity." The word "Apology" is used in the title in the sense defined by the Encyclopædic Dictionary — "Vindication, used specially of the defense of Christianity against opposers and calumniators," or (better perhaps for present

purposes, which are constructive rather than polemical), as in the Standard Dictionary — "Apology — A justification of belief."

A LAYMAN'S APOLOGY

THE ARGUMENT FROM LAW

IN his noted address before the American Association for the Advancement of Science, at St. Louis, Prof. Newcomb divided into three general periods the development to its present condition of man's explanation of the movements that he observes in the physical universe. In the first place, men notice a distinction between such of these operations as "are determined by knowable antecedent conditions, and go on with that blind disregard of consequences which they call law," and "certain other operations which they are unable thus to trace to the operation of law." Secondly, they proceed to "attribute this latter class to invisible anthropomorphic intelligences, having the power to bring about changes in nature, and having certain objects in view." But, thirdly, "as knowledge advances, one after another of these operations are found to be really determined by law, the

only difficulty being that the law was before unknown or not comprehended, or that the circumstances which determined its action were obscure or complex."

Substantially an identical thought is conveyed also by the next president's address before the same society — Prof. Marsh's, at Saratoga. "A superstitious age, when every natural event is referred to a supernatural cause," is spoken of as preceding "freedom of thought" and "definite knowledge," and the speaker adds: "If I may venture to characterize the present period in all departments of science, its main feature would be a belief in universal laws."

Years before the delivery of either of these discourses, Prof. Tyndall had summed up the "vast alterations" which modern physical science has produced "in the popular conception of the origin, rule, and governance of natural things," in this result: "One by one natural phenomena have been associated with their proximate causes; and the idea of direct personal volition mixing itself in the economy of nature is retreating more and more."

The general correctness of these statements and others like them, many of which are current — so far, at least, as they refer to the gradual abandonment of that superficial conception of the universe which imagined it a sort of self-actuating machine, the operations of which were liable to occasional interruption or variation by the interposition of external agencies — will hardly be disputed by any school of thinkers; a settled conviction of the uniformity of natural law is doubtless established, or fast establishing itself, in most enlightened minds, beyond danger of overthrow.

Nor is it open to question either, quoting the English savant again, that "many of us fear this tendency." Leading expounders of physical science, indeed, have often disclaimed the intention of furnishing ammunition for the cause of positive atheism; and there are probably few who would take issue with Prof. Newcomb's remark, in another part of the address already referred to, that "the doctrine that an intelligent cause lies behind the whole universe of phenomena, is of a class which science has

no occasion whatever to dispute." At the same time, there is unquestionably an uneasy feeling in many minds in regard to the rapid extension of the domain of what may be termed physical necessity — an apprehension, more or less distinctly formed, that mankind is in danger, not only of enlarging too widely the limits of the semi-fatalism which has taken possession of an important part of the realm of nature, but also of losing, by an indirect but not unnatural inference, its belief in a personal creator. To inquire whether such an inference is logical from the established facts, or rather to offer some considerations in partial reply to the broader question, "*What* inference in regard to the nature of the first cause ought we to draw from the admitted truth that physical laws appear to operate at present[1] with unvarying exact-

[1] It cannot have escaped the notice of any reader of the materialistic-scientific literature of our day that many apostles of that way of thinking find it occasionally useful to suppose that phenomena may sometimes occur which are not produced by the action of physical laws as we know them. Thus Huxley, while stating clearly his belief that man has never discovered any sort of life not descended from antecedent life, was yet of opinion that if he could look

ness wherever there is a physical phenomenon? "— is the purpose of this paper.

The preliminary question, whether the first cause must not of necessity be to us unknowable, may for present purposes be briefly disposed of. In its absolute essence, no doubt it must be; but then, the personality of our most intimate friends is also, in a certain sense, something quite beyond the grasp of our thinking. At the same time, we can form a very clear idea of a man's bodily prowess, and mental, emotional and moral attributes, by observing what he does. Or, to keep within the purview of physical science, we can readily acquire all the information we want about the properties of any mass of matter that we have sufficient opportunity to examine, although the indefinable (but indispensable) substratum in which these

back to the remote period of the earth's infancy, he would "be a witness of the evolution of living protoplasm from not-living matter." This is the same as to say that he at least doubted whether our present physical laws acted just as they do now, while the earth was forming. Hence we must speak of physical laws as only appearing to operate at present universally, for this is all that is invariably claimed for them.

qualities inhere, is something of which we can form no conception whatever. We understand the properties of electricity, and make daily use of the knowledge, without forming the slightest mental picture of electricity itself. In the same manner it may be reasonably supposed that while the actual mode of being of the primal cause of all phenomena is a subject which it were vain for the human imagination to attempt to depict, yet we can probably learn something of the *attributes* of that cause, by considering the method and results of its operations; and to learn these attributes is all that need be desired, since it is only by attributes that we know or can know anything or anybody. Taking for granted, then, all that science can tell us about the course of nature and its regularity, let us inquire what must be the attributes of the impelling cause by which this regularity was established and is maintained.

I

If there is to be perceived, in the physical universe as we know it, a law more prominent than the rest for its apparent exemption from all exception or irregularity, it is of course the law of gravitation. What then exactly do we mean by these words, "the law of gravitation"? Primarily, no doubt, this: That all particles of matter free to move do move toward each other at a rate of speed conditioned by the position of every particle in the universe; and that all such particles as cannot move, exert upon the obstacle a proportionate pressure. Strictly speaking, perhaps, the use of the word "law," as applied to the statement of this truth, may be held to imply a belief quite opposed to the leading tenets of popular materialism. That is to say, adopting the old apothegm, the admitted existence of a law necessarily involves the admitted existence, now or in the past, of a law-giver. As John Stuart Mill puts it: "The expression 'law of nature' is generally employed by scientific men with a sort of tacit

reference to the original sense of the word, namely, the expression of the will of a superior" — which is quite in harmony with Huxley's postulate: "I take it that all will admit there is definite *government* of this universe." This, however, is disputed; we are told that a "law" in nature is a law quite *sui generis,* the term only indicating, in physical science, the statement of an observed *mode of* action, and not a *rule for* action. Nevertheless "it is desirable to remember," as Huxley elsewhere remarks, "that the laws of nature *are not the causes* of the order of nature." Laws are not forces; and as we have good authority for the statement that "without a force underlying all motion and antecedent to it, no rational conception of dynamics is possible," [1] and Tyndall adds that "the truly scientific intellect never can attain rest until it reaches the forces by which the observed succession is produced," it follows that such an intellect will never be satisfied with the mere statement, however elaborately expressed, that matter gravitates, and gravitates in a cer-

[1] Smithsonian Report, 1879, p. 485.

tain way. Every event must have its cause, every motion its impelling force; and we must therefore amplify our explication of the law, if it is fully to express the real conviction, so as to include the assertion that there is ever present a power which produces the motion or pressure that is observed wherever there is a heavy body.

Just here, in the interest of clear thinking, one must beware of that extremely crude, not to say childish, view of the power under consideration, which conceives of something like an infinite number of elastic cords uniting all parts of the universe and dragging them together — a view which is aided and abetted by the convenient but not entirely satisfactory term, "the *attraction* of gravitation." Let it be distinctly seen that the power which makes bodies fall must be pictured in the mind as operating strictly by *pushing* and not by pulling. The distinction is more important than it may appear; for if it be overlooked, there will be danger of overlooking at the same time the truth enunciated by Prof. Carpenter, that

" ponderosity cannot be considered an essential property of matter," like extension and impenetrability; and thus of failing to notice that the phenomena of falling bodies absolutely require for their explanation the assignment of an external cause.

That gravitation cannot be thought to act by pulling, is evident from two considerations. One is, that to suppose that an atom really attracts another, is to imagine that it can exert a direct physical force at a distance from its own substance, even should mere vacuum intervene — a conception which, fully developed and understood, runs directly counter to our whole system of natural philosophy, if not to the very principles on which that system is built up. " Modern physicists "— to borrow Balfour Stewart's epigrammatic phrase —" tell us that matter cannot act where it is not." The so-called " attractions " of magnetism and electricity, so far from furnishing even doubtful instances of the exertion of such distant power, illustrate every thinker's disbelief in it, for all investigators have felt bound to assume the

existence of some " fluid " or indescribable external cause for the motions by which these " attractions " are exemplified; no one can bring his mind really to believe that the steel itself of the magnet actually draws toward itself the iron of the armature, or plays any other part than supplying one of the conditions essential for the action of the occult force that we call magnetism. And secondly (though this is only the practical application of the same theoretical idea), let it be remembered that every demonstrable pull depends for its existence upon cohesion, adhesion, or friction — all which properties of matter require *contact* for their appearance; and therefore gravitation, not requiring contact, cannot be a real pull. To illustrate: You raise a bucket from a well by pulling, and there is one point between your hand and the bucket where there is no necessary friction, no adhesion, and no cohesion — the point of contact, namely, between the rope and the bail; but at this point a portion of the rope must be below a portion of the bail, and impart the lifting force by direct and simple pushing. So

it is with all pulls of whatever name or nature; strike out friction, cohesion and adhesion, and if the action of the pull remains at all, it will have been metamorphosed into a push and nothing else; force always, so far as man can discover, *emanates from* its source, *never flows toward it.*

Whatever, therefore, may be imagined as possible in regard to the real *objective* attraction of gravitation — which is something that quite transcends our powers of conception, and lies entirely outside the domains of both science and philosophy — it remains certain that the *law* of gravitation (a purely *subjective* matter, as are all physical laws) must be held in the mind, when held clearly, in about the following form:

There is in the universe a power which tends to push each atom toward its fellows, at a rate of speed conditioned by the position of every other atom.

Consider now for a moment, in order to gather all the light that purely physical science can give us in relation to the attributes of this

demonstrated power, the full meaning of the words, "conditioned by the position of every other atom." The falling of an acorn from the bough, we are told, depends for its speed, roughly speaking, upon the mass of the earth and the height of the tree. But the acorn is made up of myriads of molecules, tens of myriads of atoms; and what the acorn is to the smallest of them all, that, or something like that, is the earth to the acorn. Yet had there been one more atom or one less in the earth, the speed of the fall had been by a certain difference increased or diminished. Not only so, but every atom in the moon affects the result, every atom in the sun, in the most distant planet, the smallest satellite, the faintest star, the dimmest mist of a nebula. Moreover, the density of the air at the time and place of the fall, and its condition as moist or dry, must make a difference; and so must the direction and force of any wind, however gentle, that may be moving; the structure of the acorn as compact or porous; its shape, and even the nature of its surface, for the smoother this is,

the less will be the friction of the air, and therefore the more rapid the descent.

Now the power that drives the acorn toward the ground takes into consideration — so modern science teaches — all these circumstances and an infinity of others; assigns to each, with unerring precision, its exact mathematical value, and then combines these values, a task compared with which the solution of all the equations since Euclid were less than the trifle of a moment. The stupendous problem is instantly worked out, and the result attained. At least, science surely tells us that the acorn moves precisely as if its rate of speed had been thus calculated; and there seems to be no escape from the deduction that the calculation has actually been made, except by embracing one of three manifest errors — that the motion has no cause, which is contrary to an axiom; that it is caused by the intrinsic properties of the acorn, which is contrary to the principle of inertia; or that it is caused by the rest of the universe, which is a mere juggle of words, sufficiently

answered by the simple thought that the rest of the universe, so far from acting as the originator of the movement, is itself, to an infinitesimal degree, a participant in it. Were the action irregular, were the movements of the planets (to pass from a very humble to a very grand illustration of the unvarying accuracy of the force of gravitation) spasmodic and incapable of reduction to the rules of arithmetic, no power of calculation, no comprehension of mathematical principles, perhaps no clear intelligence, could be confidently attributed to the power that guides them. As it is, what clearer evidence can be imagined than these movements furnish, that that power understands arithmetic? And taking into view the whole field, how can we better describe the power that reveals itself in every falling body than to call it, first and manifestly (like all powers), immaterial; second, omnipresent, as acting everywhere at the same time; third, practically omnipotent, as controlling the largest masses that we know of; fourth, omniscient, as taking into

consideration what may fairly be called an infinity of conditions; and fifth, intelligent, as solving mathematical problems of such intricacy as utterly transcends the scope of any human calculus? This conclusion plainly yields, on the one hand, no encouragement to the anthropomorphic fancies of the heathen; how much better, on the other, does it harmonize with the atheism or agnosticism of the materialist?

A similar analysis, yielding substantially the same result, might readily be applied to the other laws of inorganic matter. The power that turns the magnetized needle toward the pole; the power that expands, with almost irresistible force, a mass of freezing water at the instant of congelation; the power that unites and compresses nineteen hundred volumes of gases into a single volume of the solid sal-ammoniac — each of these, so far as appears, must be described in essentially the same terms as the power that drives the avalanche down the mountain. And then, this further step can hardly be avoided:

II

Gravitation has been spoken of as only *practically* omnipotent, and reference has been made to particles of matter which *cannot* move, though urged to do so by its influence. For instance, the power that holds Jupiter in its orbit, deflecting the enormous mass of the planet at every instant from the tangent on which its momentum would otherwise hurl it out into space, this stupendous power, when exerting itself on acorns hanging on the tree, is for a long time neutralized by the strength of the slender twigs that hold them; cohesion successfully resists gravitation. That is to say, the moment that two laws of nature conflict, we perceive the establishment of a certain harmony between them; and a new result is produced, always precisely the same under the same conditions. For an acorn of the same weight, and suspended at the same height, the strain on the twig is always identical; there must be exactly so much strength, in order to prevent the motion. There is nothing like capricious-

ness or uncertainty in any case of conflict. If an electromagnet will sustain an ounce of iron on one day, it will always sustain it, as often as the exact conditions are reproduced; we do not sometimes see gravitation victorious and sometimes magnetic attraction, circumstances being precisely equal. Hence, bearing in mind the tremendous energy of these natural forces, it would seem necessarily to follow that their causes are really only a single cause; that they are, one and all, the outflow of a single will, acting consistently with itself in every case, though appearing in a million diverse manifestations. Camille Flammarion put it this way, summing up on his seventieth birthday the gleanings of a long life devoted to the study of the universe and its laws: "Everything forms an immense unity, the unity of a force that, however unknowable, is intelligent."

III

Modern scientific speculation, however, suggests a certain objection to the phrase employed above, "the laws of *inorganic* matter."

Lamarck, a century ago, had already reached the conclusion that there is no essential difference between animate and inanimate substance; all nature, he thought, is a single world of connected phenomena, and the same causes which form and transform inanimate natural bodies are *alone* those which are at work in animate nature. In this opinion — received with considerable dissent at first, as is not surprising — the materialistic thinkers of the present day most fully concur. Huxley, long before his death, had grown out of the conception he formerly held "of the differences between living and not-living bodies"; "in the endless variation of the forms assumed by living beings," he saw in his later years "nothing but the natural product of the forces originally possessed by the substance of the universe." Tyndall scoffed at "vitality" as a special agent, and was of opinion that "the philosophy of the present day negatives the supposition that the forces of organic matter are different in kind from those of inorganic." Herbert Spencer firmly believed "that life under all its forms

has arisen by an unbroken evolution, and through the instrumentality of what are called natural causes." Maudsley assures us that "few if any will now be found to deny that every phenomenon of mind is the result of some change in the nervous elements of the brain." And Haeckel has more recently expressed the same doctrine in a highly concrete form: "The magnet attracting iron filings; powder exploding; steam driving the locomotive, *work just as does* the sensitive mimosa, when it folds its leaves at a touch — as does the amphioxus, when it buries itself in the sand — as does man, when he thinks." That is to say, in brief, all phenomena are physical phenomena and nothing more, and are produced by the action of physical forces alone.

Accepting these deliverances with as few mental grimaces as one may; shutting one's eyes to the remarkable transformation, to say the least of it, which the action of mechanical and chemical forces undergoes when operating in a living body, building up, apparently under the control of a stronger power, the structure

that they instantly begin to break down at the occurrence of death; shutting one's eyes, too, to the great facts of descent and nutrition, which appear to the ordinary observer to separate so sharply the vegetable from the mineral; and to the greater fact of consciousness, which seems still more sharply to distinguish the animal from all other orders of creation (it being confessedly difficult to conceive this phenomenon as produced by the action of purely physical forces in a mass of matter, however constituted, where there has been no preceding life)—shutting one's eyes to these objections, this thing is certain: If all vital action is produced by the same forces, acting under the same laws, as produce what we commonly call physical action, then surely the same power that drives the myriad wheels of that division of nature with which the physical sciences deal, must be also the cause (or why not say, the *Creator?*) of vegetable and animal life in all its diversified manifestations.

What light, then, is shed by these manifestations, upon the attributes of the first cause?

IV

When a mass of transformed protoplasm that we call a rose is brought into certain relations with another mass of transformed protoplasm that we call an intelligent man, certain phenomena may be observed to take place in the second of these masses. Adopting for convenience the vulgar phraseology, which in this case at least is decidedly more compendious than a strictly scientific statement would be, we say that the man sees the rose, and inhales its fragrance. Be it so that these operations are purely physical; that the power of sense-perception, as well as the complex organs that condition its exercise, is the mere product of the action of light and other appropriate stimuli upon inert matter; but unless the stream can rise higher than its source, it can hardly be doubted that the impeller and manager of these stimuli, beside possessing that intelligence which is revealed in the operation of the physical forces on inorganic substance, must have also in his nature something akin to the per-

ceptive powers that he has developed in the products of his skill. To suppose the contrary, would be like imagining that a man might construct an automaton endowed not only with the same senses as himself, but with others beside, of whose nature the contriver of the apparatus can form no conception. Let it be remembered, too, that senses inconceivable to us can be imagined as possible; that the material universe may have many more aspects than the five that we know of; and hence that it is at least not improbable that the senses, so to speak, of the first cause are many times more in number, as well as more powerful, more delicate, and more accurate, than ours.

V

The phenomenon of perceiving the rose, moreover, is quickly followed by another — the appearance of a feeling, admiration, in the man. With the nature and exact genesis of this feeling, we are not at present concerned. Give what account of its being one may, everybody knows that it exists; and the point to note is

that, whatever emotion may be, the First Cause must possess the capacity for it; else he surely could not develop it by the action of the laws through which he works. That is to say, he not only *knows,* and can *perceive,* but he *feels,* as well. And when one reflects upon the depth of meaning that the word emotion covers; or, to restrict the field of view and thus deepen the impression, when one weighs thoughtfully the words love, hate, anger, fear, contempt, gratitude, and remembers how far the most intense development of any passion within human experience falls short of what may easily be imagined as possible with a more exalted emotional constitution, it speedily comes to be perceived that we go not as far in our induction as the phenomena plainly warrant, if we fail to assign to the first cause of these phenomena a capacity for the exercise of what are generally considered spiritual faculties, unspeakably excelling any such capacity that we possess, in proportion perhaps to the difference between man's puny muscular strength and the amazing physical energy that reveals itself in the move-

ments of the stellar systems. Let it be granted in the fullest sense that man and all his faculties, of whatever name or kind, have been developed by the action of purely physical force on utterly inert matter, precisely as a crystal is built up in a solution of alum; and the inference is irresistible that the originator of these forces, the weaver who has so arranged their innumerable strands as to produce at last the infinitely diversified web of human feeling, must himself possess at least the capacity for any emotion that his creatures can know.

VI

There are phenomena, however, higher in rank than those of the emotions. Beyond the realm of æsthetics, in the widest sense of that term, lies the domain of ethics. As much more complicated as is a feeling than a thought, so much more complicated is the sense of duty, the appreciation of the word *ought,* than a feeling. This highest class of phenomena, also, like those of the order next below them, are now traced back to their ultimate source in the action

of physical force; and we need not dispute the pedigree. Let the "genesis of the conscience" be accepted exactly as it is described by the most "advanced" philosophers; let it be granted that the restraining power which kept Casabianca at his post of duty while the ship burned, and the musicians playing on the deck of the *Titanic* till the waves engulfed them; and the magnificent courage that nerved Woodland, in the Hudson River tunnel, to order the breaking of the deadeyes in the air-lock, certain to bring instant suffocation upon himself while giving a chance for the escape of his subordinates — were simply the resultants of purely physical force, in exactly the same sense as is the flight of a cannon-ball the consequence of the explosion of the powder; and no conclusion can be more certain than this: That the impeller of physical force, the being who works out by its operation such results as these, must himself possess the capacity for the same actions or for others of still higher grandeur. That is to say, the Power that has produced the moral sensibility of mankind, no matter by what

means, and no matter what that sensibility is, must himself feel the distinction between noble deeds and base, between good and evil. He must be endowed, not only with intellectual and æsthetic faculties, but with the highest of all, a moral nature.

VII

A single point remains for consideration. *What sort* of a moral nature is it that the First Cause possesses? *What kind* of passions sway his will? Are his purposes toward the sentient products of the operation of his laws, benevolent or the reverse? There is any quantity of indisputable evil in the world. Physical pain is almost co-extensive with the capacity for suffering it; tastes are daily offended, feelings are wounded, the sense of equity is shocked, just and reasonable hopes are disappointed, good deeds bring mischief on those who do them, crime is incessant and the guilty flourish, while the innocent languish under calamity. If, then, the occasional performance of a self-sacrificing act under a sense of duty, is evidence that the

First Cause appreciates what we mean by the word *ought,* and finds satisfaction in the realization of the ideas that that word embodies, is not the daily commission of all manner of iniquity evidence that it — or He — has also a certain sympathy with the reckless indulgence of selfish and malevolent passions? Can we by any means determine whether these feelings, or those that we call morally good, preponderate in his nature?

The answer to these questions must be sought, it would seem, in a broad study of the history of the human race. To the ultimate benefit of mankind, it is plainly reasonable that the prosperity of all other orders of finite intelligences, so far as we know them, should be subordinated. If the general effect of the operation of physical laws through the ages of development, past, present and future, is, on the whole, to build up and establish a high and ever higher type of manhood, so adjusted withal to its environment as to secure a great and ever-increasing degree of happiness, then surely the conclusion must be accepted that the First Cause

is benevolent — sympathizes, in other words, with good, and wars eternally with evil. If natural law does work, on the whole, in this direction, no labor need be taken to account for the existence of pains and sorrow. Many suppositions will answer. It may be that the highest good might not otherwise be attained; it may be, as the Manicheans held (with a very considerable show of reason, the present writer thinks) that the First Cause *could not help* the intrusion of evil but would have all men to be saved from everything that hurts them, if he had his unobstructed way; it may be that the evil is not really so evil as we think it, but has a good side after all, possibly disciplinary, that we know not of. Or, and as I think wisest of all, we may well be satisfied to take the calmly scientific view here as in many other departments of thought, especially in the physical sciences, that we frankly admit our inability to understand much that we are compelled to accept as true.

But if humanity is not developing, improving, and increasing in happiness through the ages,

it does not appear that we are justified in assigning to the First Cause a nature much more kindly or more elevated, morally speaking, than our own; good traits and evil can both be discerned, and which class preponderates we know not.

If, again, men are growing worse and more wretched, how can the conclusion be avoided that their Creator, judging Him from such of His works as we see and know, is inclined to moral evil and pursues vicious ends?

In which direction, then, is our race tending? Shall we seek for traditions of a golden age among the fading records of the far-off past, or expect the coming of our halcyon days in the yet remote future? Was the highly unorthodox Gibbon on firm ground in reaching — at the close of the second volume of his monumental work, after taking an extensive survey of human history with a breadth of view certainly never surpassed and perhaps never equalled — what he calls "the pleasing conclusion that every age of the world has increased and still increases the real wealth, the happi-

ness, the knowledge, and perhaps the virtue, of the human race"? Let sociology answer — the "science in which," according to its greatest exponent, "the phenomena of all other sciences are included."

In the book from which the above phrase is taken, Spencer's "Study of Sociology"— not to explore further the writings of that deep and clear thinker — the expectation of a constant improvement in human character, and a constant diminution of the present miseries of life, is manifestly before the writer's mind from beginning to end —"the conception," to use his own words, "that the remote future has in store forms of social life higher than any we have imagined." Nowhere explicitly formulated as the author's opinion, this belief is everywhere taken for granted, and colors every chapter. Thus we are told, in regard to man's expected moral improvement, that "a civilized humanity will render either glory" [that of proudly resisting aggression and that of meekly submitting to it] "impossible of achievement. A diminishing egoism and an increasing altruism

must make each of these diverse kinds of honor unattainable. Along with a latent self-assertion, there will go a readiness to yield to others, kept in check by the refusal of others to accept more than their due." "There has to be a continually-changing compromise between force and right, during which force decreases step by step as right increases step by step, and . . . every step brings . . . ultimate good." A time is looked for when social discipline shall have "so far modified human character that reverence for law, as rooted in the moral order of things, will serve in place of reverence for the power which enforces law." "Those of our own day who pride themselves in consuming much and producing nothing, and who care little for the well-being of their society so long as it supplies them good dinners, soft beds, and pleasant lounging-places, may be regarded with astonishment by men of times to come, living under higher social forms. . . . It will become a matter of wonder that there should ever have existed those who thought it admirable to enjoy without working, at the expense of others who

worked without enjoying." And with respect to happiness, it is hinted "that after tens of thousands of years of discipline, the lives of men in society [will] have become harmonious; *character and conditions* [*will*] *have, little by little, grown into adjustment,*" so that one will always like to do what he ought to do, inclination and duty going hand in hand, and all action will have become pleasurable.

If it is really to this end that development is tending, how can it be doubted that the Creator seeks the good of His creatures, takes satisfaction in the conjunction of virtuous actions and that happiness which we all feel *ought* to be their certain reward, and hence is in His essential nature benevolent? The deductions of sociology may thus be fairly considered as supplementing the teachings of an old Hebrew poĕm—"he that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see? he that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know?"—with the further lesson that he who inspires good deeds is himself good.

And if it be said that, after all, we can glean

only vague intimations of the moral character of the First Cause from the most advanced sociology — as indeed we glean only vague intimations of His power, His knowledge, and His perceptive and emotional faculties from the study of physical law and human character — it may not be amiss to reflect that another Hebrew writer, thousands of years ago, had already asked: "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know?"[1] Science therefore adopts only the same conclusion as do the sacred books of the ancient Jews, when it tells us that if man is ever fully to know God, it must be by means of a revelation.

VIII

Just a word, by way of corollary, on the vexed, and sometimes muddled, subject of miracles. For those who conceive of the universe as

[1] Whence, by the way, had this man this wisdom, living so many centuries before "the philosopher of the unknowable" was born?

a sort of clock, which may perhaps have been adjusted, wound up and started by some outside agency, but which now runs by a power within itself quite independent of the maker and winder (confusing law with force, and making of it a kind of mainspring), it may indeed be difficult to believe that there is ever any interference with the rotation of the wheels. One is strongly inclined to reason that when a mechanism has been laboriously constructed to run regularly, it is thereafter likely to be let alone. But as soon as it is perceived that the movements of the universe more closely resemble those of the fingers of the pianist, impelled at all times by direct volition, and having a living personality ever present within them — the law in accordance with which they occur having really no more objective existence than has the melody which the musician is playing — it becomes easily conceivable, no matter how long regularity may have continued, that an occasional variation may at any time be introduced, if only there arise a reason for such change.

And is there no reason for an occasional ir-

regularity in the movements of the physical world? Will not the intelligent Father of All desire, in the progress of the ages, to reveal Himself (since science supports theology in the inculcation that of themselves they can never wholly find Him out) to His intelligent children? And if He is so to reveal Himself, how, without miracles, could the revelation be satisfactorily attested? How indeed, without miracles, could a real revelation ever be made at all?

A BOOK SUCCESS THAT NEEDS EXPLAINING

IF ever a literary composition was wounded in the house of its friends, was not only so put before the public as to make it as little inviting as possible to the general reader, and as liable as possible to every kind of disadvantageous misapprehension, but also was commended to attention in such ill-judged fashion as to make sure of exciting antipathy, that composition is certainly the Bible. It is printed, in the vast majority of editions in most modern languages, in a manner which could hardly have been better calculated to prevent the possibility of easy and appreciative reading. Everything is set just alike, whether prose or poetry, idyl or drama, which is bad enough — if anybody wants to appreciate how bad, let him give five minutes to the Ferrar Fenton version, and see with what amazing emphasis the varieties of structure and

purpose of the different kinds of writing are brought instantly to his notice by the varied typography. This however is only the beginning of the maltreatment to which the book has been subjected. The matter is chopped up, first into "chapters," generally of what seems to be intended as approximately uniform length, with little regard to continuity of thought or story, these chapters marked off by broad spaces, big numbers, and in many cases an elaborate and often impertinent and useless summary, not seldom including matter of the nature of commentary, forcing upon the reader somebody's ex-cathedra interpretation of what may be a very obscure and doubtful passage on which there is abundant room for difference of opinion. A device better adapted to distract attention and discourage consecutive reading, actually inviting you to lay down the book every ten minutes, could hardly be conceived. The chapters are then chopped up into "verses," still further interfering with connected thought, often separating closely allied clauses, sometimes combining two or more dis-

tinct matters that should not be fused together. Not satisfied with these serious impediments to any sort of agreeable and thoughtful perusal, the editors of the larger editions have often gone much farther. They have plowed a furrow down the middle of the page, or added an ugly fringe on each side, getting in a quantity of notes of one sort and another, " references " and the like, and sprinkled the text freely with little letters, numbers, and cabalistic signs, distracting to the eye and the attention. I do not say that these features are always useless; quite the contrary; *some* readers, for *some* purposes, need them. But then — imagine any other great composition presented to the general reader in such shape! Who does not see the heavy handicap it would have to bear in winning attention?

It is doubtless due in no small measure to the style of printing adopted, that so few people read the Bible as they read other books, really trying to understand the author's point of view and to follow and weigh his thought. It has been turned into a sort of fetich or sibylline

oracle, a collection of statements of about equal authority and importance, every one to be taken blindly and literally at what appears at first sight to be its significance, and a certain portion to be waded through per diem as a religious duty, without taking the trouble to make any endeavor at putting it into its proper mental setting, to consider the personality or circumstances of the writer or speaker, or the connection of what he is saying in one place with something that he says over the leaf. So you read so many chapters, however unintelligently and unsympathetically, you must of course receive spiritual benefit! The endless genealogies; the elaborate geographical details of the partition of Canaan among the tribes; the twice-told story of the beginning of vegetable and animal life, in Genesis; the offerings of the princes at the dedication of the tabernacle (detailed at length for the first man, and eleven times repeated, word for word); the books of Esther and Solomon's Song; the mysterious imagery of the prophets, like Ezekiel's wheel and Daniel's numbers, largely unintelligible to mod-

ern, or at least to occidental, readers — have come to stand, in the minds of many good people, on about the same level as the Fifty-First Psalm or the Sixtieth Chapter of Isaiah or the opening of John's Gospel. We have, it is to be hoped, outgrown the superstition of opening the book at random and taking the first passage that meets the eye as an answer to a question of conscience or duty; but honestly, do we give the Bible very much better intellectual treatment, all things considered, than if we still used it for such unworthy and nonsensical purposes?

That the Bible often, generally, *is* read in a hap-hazard, inattentive, unprofitable fashion, a fashion in which no other important book is read by anybody who reads it at all, can easily be established by asking as many religious people as you like whether they have ever noticed any of the cases, happily very few, of careless editing or clear blundering by some ancient transcriber, as in Luke xvi, 18, where a sentence has been pitchforked into a place where it is hardly possible to suppose that it belongs;

or as in the mix-up in Job by which we lose the final speech that Zophar must have been described as making, the writer of the drama having doubtless intended to give each of the comforters three addresses in regular turn, Job answering them one by one; or the seemingly useless repetition of II Samuel xxii, in Psalm xviii; of II Kings xix, in Isaiah xxxvii; of II Kings xxv, in Jeremiah xxxix and again in Jeremiah lii; of Joshua xv, 15-19, in Judges i, 11-15. Cases of confusion or vain duplication like these could hardly occur in any other serious book without being detected by readers generally; printed as is the Bible, and read, very often, in a fashion to agree with the printing, it is not to be expected that they would be noticed. Not, of course, that it is really of vital consequence whether such peculiarities are observed or not; but what *is* of vital consequence is the general habit of careless reading that, passing these blemishes by, is certain to pass by also relations of thought that are entirely indispensable to any kind of intelligent appreciation of the real purport of the greatest books

of the canon. For one who really desires to understand such writings, it is plainly better, far better, not to touch them for a month, and then read deliberately a whole book through at a sitting if possible, or at least read at one sitting the equivalent of many Bible chapters, than to read daily a certain limited stint, stopping short where somebody has put in a chapter heading. For such deliberate reading, the whole style of typography of the enormous majority of popular editions is just about as badly devised as it is possible to imagine; and thus, in its appeal for intelligent consideration, the book is heavily handicapped.

And then again, the fetich idea, beside resulting in a deplorable loss of all sense of values and proportions, has brought about a lot of more than useless discussion over trivialities, diverting attention badly from the real purposes of the writers. How can the debates in Job, or the deep philosophy of Ecclesiastes, or the great lessons that the author of Jonah wanted to teach, be appreciated by readers who do not perceive that the incidents, whether they ever oc-

curred or not, are simply used as pegs on which to hang the discourses, but suppose, instead, that one must either accept the unprovable and utterly immaterial historicity of these books or reject them altogether? It has been well said that the authors undoubtedly expected their readers to exercise some commonsense; and as this exercise is unquestionably seriously impeded by the way in which their writings are presented to the public, both in typographical arrangement and in the sense in which many people who are supposed to speak with authority insist that they must be taken, it is plain that the authors' purpose is largely defeated and that their work must suffer from being misunderstood and therefore undervalued.

Then further, a more serious matter still: Certain portions of the Bible which are plainly intended as historical are open to at least two kinds of reasonable and unfavorable criticism that cannot be answered by supposing transcriptional errors. The real difficulties in the way of harmonizing its different parts and making what seem at first sight to be its clear teachings

commend themselves to an enlightened mind and conscience, are great and many, quite sufficient, as doubtless most intelligent persons are now agreed, to negative absolutely the supposition once widely held (though without the smallest justification in any claim put forward by the book itself) that every line was dictated verbatim by the Creator of the universe, the writers acting as scribes only, but infallible scribes — the view expressed in a well known work on "Inspiration and Interpretation" in the following explicit terms:

"The Bible is none other than the Voice of Him that sitteth upon the Throne. Every book of it — every chapter of it — every verse of it — every word of it — every syllable of it — (Where are we to stop?) — every letter of it — is the direct utterance of the Most High. The Bible is none other than the Word of God, not some part of it more, some part of it less, but all alike, the utterance of Him who sitteth upon the Throne, absolute, faultless, unerring, supreme."

One would like to ask the writers of the above and similar declarations what they really and honestly think of the stories of the making

of Eve, and of the animals in the ark; of the participation of the Egyptian cattle in the sufferings of the sixth, seventh and tenth plagues after "all the cattle of Egypt" had died in the fifth; of the many incidents in the Exodus (not including anything obviously intended as miraculous) that really seem, after a little thoughtful figuring, entirely incredible; of the awful cruelties, said to have been divinely commanded, that marked the Jewish conquest of Canaan; of the amazingly naïve statement in Judges i, 19 that "the Lord was with Judah, and he drave out the inhabitants of the mountain, but could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, *because they had chariots of iron*" (!), or of the apparent recognition of what was practically idolatry and debasing superstition, in many passages of the same book; of the manifest inconsistency in the story of Balaam, against whom God's anger was kindled because he went with the messengers of the king after having been divinely commanded to do so; of several trifling inaccuracies in history in the Gospels, including Luke's (prob-

ably interpolated) genealogy of Christ — very trifling inaccuracies, to be sure, but quite inconsistent with the notion that " every word " was divinely inspired exactly as we have it; of the incomprehensible parable of the unjust steward; or of the list of the twelve tribes in Rev. vii, 5, where Dan is omitted, and *Joseph* and Manasseh (father and son, not *Ephraim* and Manasseh, brothers, as in Numbers i, 10) figure as the heads of separate tribes.

It is perfectly evident, surely, that insistence on any such view of the writing of the Bible as that held by the author above quoted, and formerly, if not even now, very familiar to the general public, must act as a powerful deterrent to the circulation of the book. If it is all foolishness, and impious foolishness besides, to read it as one reads other serious treatises that are supposed to have important practical bearing on one's daily life — to read it, that is to say, with constant questioning as to its accuracy in statement and its reasonableness in doctrine — it would seem too much to expect of the great majority of men that they read it at all. If it

is a choice between reading with full antecedent and implicit belief in the plenary inspiration of "every letter," and neglecting it in toto, one can easily forecast the choice that thousands of very intelligent and thoughtful people will make.

Then further, it must be noted that some portions of the Bible, which cannot properly be called obscene, the innocent intention of the writer being perfectly evident, are nevertheless, judged by our present standards, highly indelicate and unpleasant — a drop in the bucket to be sure, but still not quite negligible. I do not speak of what seems in this age mere coarseness of expression, ways of saying things that can be improved, as in many cases they are improved in the latest versions, by making a not-quite-literal translation; but of such matter as the origin of the tribes of Moab and Ammon; the stories of the two unhappy Tamars and of the Levite of Mount Ephraim; of certain proceedings of Absalom during David's exile; of a revolting piece of symbolism that is said to have been divinely enjoined on the Prophet

Ezekiel; of several whole pages in the mysterious book of that great preacher; and of the beginning of Hosea. Surely it is clear that the inclusion of matter that cannot be read aloud in mixed company, and matter that nobody would willingly place in the hands of young people, must weigh heavily against the circulation of a book that has no other claim to attention than that it deals seriously and authoritatively with great spiritual problems.

And yet, with these and other handicaps in the way of securing the general reading of the Bible, how that book does sell! It has been translated complete into about a hundred and twenty languages, and portions of it into more than five hundred. The total issue of Bibles and parts of Bibles must be, according to the best compilation of figures possible, certainly not less than eighteen millions, probably nineteen millions or more, per annum. How the issues of any other book, of any other dozen books, one might almost say any other hundred books, sink into insignificance in comparison!

Nor does it, I think, help much in explaining

the unapproached popularity of the Bible as compared with other books, to point out that its enormous circulation is to a considerable degree forced — that it is offered very cheaply, often gratuitously, and that people are generally entreated to read it as a duty. This only puts the problem a step back. Why do millions of thoughtful men and women urge the reading of the Bible, and unite themselves in societies that spend vast amounts of money in printing it in every tongue under heaven, offering it without money or price to those who cannot pay for it, and placing it in all sorts of public and semi-public rooms, that the wayfarer may be tempted to pick it up in odd moments? Has anybody ever thought it worth while to press, in any such manner, the circulation of any other book ever written? I do not, of course, forget the general teaching of the Koran among Mohammedans or of the writings of Confucius and his followers among the Chinese; but the case is not parallel, because these works constitute practically the entire classical literature of the peoples among whom they are circulated;

and there is really nothing else for the teachers to teach, the teachers being what they are. And beside all this, Bibles are printed and sold as a cold-blooded matter of business for profit, in far larger numbers than may generally be supposed. I received, while writing this chapter, the catalog of one of several American publishers engaged in producing Bibles commercially, which illustrates the extent of the business. It is a pamphlet of 68 octavo pages, handsomely printed in red and black and adorned with a number of engravings, and describes a bewildering variety of styles, nearly two hundred in all, I should say. A "confidential" circular to representatives is included, setting forth "the great possibilities in the Bible business" and beginning with the undoubtedly truthful statement, made for a business purpose as it is, that "for many years the interest in Bible study has been increasing rapidly." The cover gives pictures of a number of large rooms apparently devoted exclusively to Bible-making. While publishers find it profitable to go into the business to such an extent, too much impor-

tance should not be attached to the matter of forced and gratuitous circulation. Fancy anybody offering to the general public, in something like two hundred different styles, any other book that ever was written, and making really a big business of selling it!

It is submitted, then, that the vast circulation of the Bible among the most intelligent nations of the earth, nearly two thousand years after its latest line was written, a circulation maintained in the face of special difficulties of formidable nature, is distinctly a phenomenon that invites attention and challenges inquiry. How is it to be accounted for? It is surely safe to reply, generally speaking, that this book lives and spreads because it supplies an imperative demand of human nature, and in the last analysis, for no other reason. But how comes it that there is such a demand, and that this book meets it? That is the crux of the matter; and I wish that the reader, if he believes the Bible to be inspired in only the same sense as applies to other books, would pause here a moment, and ask himself what answers he can think

of. (I say ask himself, because he will find it wasting time and trouble to search the literature that has been laboriously developed by writers of his way of thinking, for any suggestion of value on this particular point.) If no explanation occurs to him that seems quite to fit the facts of the case and at the same time harmonize with his opinions of the authorship and authority of the Jewish-Christian Scriptures, let him consider this hypothesis: That the book, while not very accurately described as a revelation from our maker, is nevertheless *the record* of such a revelation, a record written by men who were subject to every kind of human frailty and error, but still unmistakably such a record of a revelation as appeals irresistibly by its own force to the minds as well as the hearts and consciences of mankind, with infinitely greater power than can possibly be claimed for any other writing whatsoever. It seems to me that this explanation meets completely the demands of the spirit of rigidly scientific inquiry. As the somewhat "unorthodox" Dr. Robertson Smith (who rejects the supposed

application to Jesus of Nazareth of the so-called messianic portions of Isaiah) well expresses it: "It is not and cannot be denied that the prophets found for themselves and their nation a knowledge of God, and not a mere speculative knowledge, but a practical fellowship of faith with him, which the seekers of truth among the Gentiles never attained to." Surely the same may be said — not to speak of the clear white light of most of the New Testament — of the authors of Job and Ecclesiastes, and preëminently of the Psalmists. Think what one may of the so-called "imprecatory" Psalms, it will hardly, I suppose, be denied in any quarter that their book as a whole reveals a grasp of the character of the Creator which fully meets man's highest conception and longing, and which is quite without parallel in the whole range of the voluminous literature of spiritual aspiration outside the Bible. Not less strikingly characteristic is the monotheism of the Old Testament, monotheism so evidently ingrained in all the thinking of its authors that the use, in a few places in the early chapters of Genesis, of plural

words referring to the Creator, hardly needs explanation. And note the *character* of the monotheism of even the earliest books of the canon, the grandeur of the conception of the nature of the one God whose unique existence is everywhere assumed. Genius would strive in vain, it seems to me, to express now in many words such an apprehension of a self-existent, eternal, majestic Creator as is embodied in the brief phrase in Exodus: "I AM hath sent me." That Creator, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, just, merciful, good, is seen clearly enough through all the mists of even childishly anthropomorphic figure, all the misapprehensions and errors of the fallible men who wrote these wonderful books, and whose very blunders are enough to show pretty conclusively that they could not possibly have invented the being whom they describe (if we take their writings at what seems to be their surface meaning) so inadequately and unsatisfactorily.

But man's highest nature demands, for its enlightenment and guidance, more than knowl-

edge of our Maker, even supposing such knowledge to be as full as our minds, in their present condition of development, are capable of apprehending. We need a revelation as to ourselves, as well; we ask instinctively: "How do I stand in God's opinion? What does he want of me? How may I please him?" Such questions seem to have been asked by, it is hardly too much to say, *all* men in all countries and in all ages, even by the lowest savages who confuse gods and ghosts but are found always, I believe, to recognize the existence of immaterial powers whose favor they regard it as imperatively necessary for them to endeavor to secure. Now the Bible has certainly been found to answer this demand. The reader feels, all through its pages, that the two great divisions of duty, reverence toward God and beneficence to man, are constantly recognized, even when not formally stated in combination, as they repeatedly are. Very suggestive, and made lucidly explicit in Christ's summary, is the arrangement of the Commandments, the first four outlining broadly our relations to

God, the last six covering pretty completely our duties toward each other, in thought as well as in deed. Please notice the high spirituality of the Tenth. All overt acts in contravention of what it demands are pretty completely covered by the prohibitions of the Seventh and the Eighth, and it seems to be almost certain that an uninspired law-giver of the time of Moses, especially if laying down rules for a half-savage multitude of brick-making slaves just liberated, would have stopped right there, stopped where all human laws necessarily stop, instead of going on to ordain that you must not only respect other people's property and let their wives alone, but you must not even cherish a wish that you possessed them. Unless the Hebrews had absorbed much more of the religious philosophy of the Egyptians than is anywhere suggested by the story, it seems to me that the promulgation of this so sweeping law must have amazed them greatly.

But further, more generally and yet more specifically, we have such summaries as these: "In every nation he that (1) feareth Him and

(2) worketh righteousness is accepted with Him"; "This is His commandment, that we (1) believe on the name of His Son and (2) love one another." Sometimes the order is reversed, duty to man coming first, as in the noted epitome of pure religion by St. James — "To (1) visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction and (2) keep himself unspotted from the world"; or as in the anonymous Epistle to the Hebrews — "Follow peace with all men (1), and holiness (2) without which no man shall see the Lord"; or as in Micah's pregnant question, "What doth the Lord require of thee but (1) to do justly, to love mercy, and (2) to walk humbly with thy God?" One feels also that the principle of the Golden Rule, the doctrine that mere justice to our fellow-men is by no means all that is required by the highest ethics, is recognized all through the Scriptures, even so far back as the writing of what many students believe to be the oldest book of all, for Job protested that he had not "rejoiced at the destruction of him that hated me or lifted up myself when evil found him or suffered my

mouth to sin by wishing a curse to his soul." Admonitions against that kind of transgression, exactly the kind that the Golden Rule reprehends, abound. A section of the formal law, as given in Leviticus, reads: "Thou shalt not bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." The Proverbs say: "Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth"; "Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me, I will render to the man according to his work"; "If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat, and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink, for thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the Lord shall reward thee." Please notice that these are all Old Testament doctrines, and notice that they fully cover the state of the heart, as well as the behavior; one must not even "*bear any grudge.*" They merely anticipate the rule given by Christ, and in fact he quoted the affirmative part of the Levitical precept word for word.

Nor is that quite all. It is said that we do

not discern the doctrine of man's immortality in the Old Testament, and assuredly it is not prominent there. Nevertheless the careful reader will find in even the oldest books much matter that is hardly intelligible unless it be supposed that that doctrine is taken for granted. The story of the Witch of Endor, for instance, a story that shows the dark superstition that obscured the religious beliefs of the Jews all through the dismal era of the Judges, presupposes life after death, and more than presupposes it, if we give their full natural meaning to the words of the disembodied spirit of Samuel addressing Saul: "To-morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me." Similarly, and with more emphasis, in Ecclesiastes, the writer asserting rather distinctly, it seems to me, the possibility of immortality for man exclusively among all earthly creatures: "Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?" And still more clearly in Daniel's prediction of the resurrection and the conditions of attaining exactly the blessed state beyond the

grave that Christ promised in words no more explicit: "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever." With all the clearer light of the New Testament, there is little of doctrinal value to add to that declaration. Well said Huxley — yes, the agnostic Huxley — that there is no other book which so "humanizes" its readers, so makes them "feel that each figure in that vast historical procession fills, like themselves, but a momentary space in the interval between two eternities, and earns the blessings or the curses of all time, according to its effort to do good and hate evil."

Here then, it seems to me, we have the facts: Whatever may be said about unprofitable or unintelligible portions of the Bible, the consensus of the impressions of those who have read it is that it embodies such a revelation of the Creator as fully satisfies man's best concep-

tions, and such a revelation as there is no possible reason for believing that man could ever invent; that it lays down broad rules of conduct for man, both in his relations to his Maker and to his fellow-creatures, which completely satisfy the demands of an enlightened conscience, and beyond which no rules could go, while at the same time the nature of these rules is such as to render almost absurdly incredible the suggestion that unaided man may have devised them, especially the kind of men who wrote out the law of the Jews, and in the times in which they wrote; and that it also promises, even in books written long before the advent of Christ, exactly the immortality, and prescribes exactly the conditions of attaining it, that we feel ought to be. If the Maker of man revealed himself and his will and the existence of a real life beyond the grave, to the authors of the Bible as he does not to the world at large, and if they did their best, in ignorance and prejudice, to set down the revelation in writing, the problem is solved. No wonder their book holds unrivaled sway in the markets of the world.

ORTHODOXY AND NATURE

BY "nature," for present purposes, is understood the material universe, including all phenomena with which the non-metaphysical sciences deal — the whole body, one might perhaps say, of concrete truth, about which, so far as satisfactory investigation has been pushed, we feel positively sure; the actual facts, excluding all hypotheses which are from their nature incapable of demonstration. By "orthodoxy" (neglecting the etymology of the word), is meant a certain system of belief on subjects in regard to which neither the senses nor pure reason can furnish any direct testimony — the common opinion of the so-called "evangelical" churches. This system of belief indubitably includes, among others, the following points:

1. That all men, everywhere, incline naturally to evil rather than to good; and that no

one makes persistent progress toward a strictly virtuous life without supernatural assistance.

2. That man, nevertheless, is entirely free in his choices as a moral agent, and is therefore responsible for all his deeds; and yet that God not only foreknows to the minutest particular whatever comes to pass, but also so directs the course of events as to work out fully his own will, both in the general history of nations and in the personal life of every human being.

3. That the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children, to the third and fourth generation.

4. That man's eternal well-being depends largely upon his complying with certain conditions which are stated in a number of ancient manuscripts, written in languages that no man for centuries has ordinarily spoken, and for the most part not explicitly formulated even in these writings, but expressed in general terms, or left to be inferred by the reader, in such manner that there is wide room for differences of opinion on many not unimportant points.

5. That some men who appear to lead sober,

honest, industrious, kindly and useful lives, are nevertheless the continual objects of the wrath of God, and pass at death to an unenviable condition —

6. From which it is at least doubtful whether there shall ever be deliverance.

That these tenets are regarded with dislike by a very large number of the people to whom they have been propounded — excluding such persons as have never distinctly apprehended their purport in its depth and fullness, and excluding also such, at the other extreme of the scale, as have either been able to reason out for themselves, or have received understandingly from others, a satisfactory system of theodicy — goes without saying. Some accept them, or suppose they accept them, in an unthinking, implicit way, as matters too sacred for prying curiosity or impartial discussion, while secretly — half unconsciously, perhaps — wishing that most of them were not true. Some hold their judgment in suspense, seeking salvation for themselves indeed in the manner prescribed by the orthodox faith, and laboring, very likely, to

persuade others to follow their example, but really entertaining all the time a certain degree of suspicion that perhaps they are taking unnecessary trouble, and a certain degree of hope, consequently, that their friends who neglect entirely the alleged essentials of salvation may fare just as well in the next world notwithstanding. Some reject them utterly and contemptuously as inconsistent with each other, incompatible with the conceptions they have formed as to what ought to be the character of God, or as on other grounds unworthy the belief of independent and fearless thinkers. It is the purpose of this paper to point out that certain striking parallelisms to these, the most "unpopular" dogmas of the Christian faith, may readily be discerned in nature, the physical universe that surrounds us and of which we form a part.

I

The doctrine of total depravity, how it has been, and now is, scorned and execrated by turns! Yet divorce the idea from theological

phraseology, consider it as a practical every-day subject ought to be considered by a rational and prudent man who has other men to deal with, and how do the facts look? Do the persons that one knows the most about, generally exhibit a marked tendency toward discovering for themselves, and then abandoning, their faults and bad practices? Are our social and business regulations adjusted on the presumption that men may commonly be trusted and that evil purposes are rather the exception? Does one ordinarily receive strangers into the intimacy of his family on the strength of personal attractiveness and courteous mien, without responsible introduction, the implied or expressed guarantee of some trusted friend? Does the proprietor of a great mercantile establishment allow his subordinates to keep their accounts as they please or not at all, taking for granted that he will receive from each of them the correct amounts of money? Are important agreements — no matter how simple — usually settled by word of mouth, without the execution of formal papers that will bind the signer in a

court of law? Is it thought useless to take a written receipt for a payment because the person to whom it is made is not likely to forget the transaction? Are loans effected at the Stock Exchange without furnishing tangible security? Are good habits as easy of acquisition, and do they hold one's life as firmly in their grasp when established, as bad habits?

Such questions answer themselves; any child old enough to understand them will give the correct reply. Put this case to any group of young people: "Suppose there are two boys of the same age, living next door to each other, in houses just alike; their fathers are employed at the same rate of pay in the same factory, and in every respect the two homes are very similar. Suppose, however, that one of these boys has been brought up to speak the truth at all hazards, to abhor dishonesty and impurity, to control his temper, to thank God every morning for protection through the night, and to seek divine pardon every evening for the sins of the day — while the other boy lies and steals and fights and swears. Suppose now, that the two

become intimate friends, and are constantly together. What do you think will happen? Will each learn of the other — the one, good things; the other, evil things? Or will one of them gradually copy the other in *all* things?" I have tried the experiment several times, and have never yet failed of receiving the same reply: "The bad boy will spoil the good boy!" And the experience of mature life, it can hardly be doubted, will confirm the opinion thus formed under the guidance of the clear instinct of childhood. Practically, all sane men concur in it.

I was traveling, one pleasant autumn afternoon, through the great fruit region of Western New York. Two men sitting near me, whose words I could not choose but hear, had been discussing religious (or irreligious) questions in a manner which left no doubt, though that particular point had not come up, that they would both have pooh-poohed total depravity as the nonsensical fancy of an antiquated age. But as the widespread apple orchards, heavy laden, met our eyes in every direction, the conversation

turned upon fruit, its production and marketing, and it transpired that one of these men was a buyer of apples in large quantities. The risks and losses of the business were spoken of, and especially the frauds attempted by dishonest shippers. The fruit-buyer remarked, however, that he knew just one man, only one, whose apples he received without examination; they were always exactly what they were represented to be, or if there was any difference, they turned out rather better than the grower described them. "Well," answered his companion, "my private opinion is that some fine day when you take an unusually large lot from that fellow at a high price, you will find yourself egregiously swindled; and then he will play off his good character on you, and have some plausible story about its not being really his fault, and you'll never get satisfaction." The first man laughed, and said, yes, he supposed so; it was the way of the world.

I thought then, and think now, that this anticipation of villainy was not justified by the facts as stated. I believed then, and believe

now, that in every half-christianized country there are thousands of men in every walk of life whose word is as good as their bond, and who hold their personal integrity above all questions of loss or gain of money. But the point of interest in the conversation is that these speakers — hard, practical men of business, accustomed to driving bargains with all sorts of buyers and sellers, and to forming quick and shrewd judgments of the character and intentions of those with whom their vocations brought them into contact — that these men had derived from their experience so low an opinion of the actual morality of their fellows; that they had plainly reached the conclusion that there are few indeed who are really honest except so far as they think it their best policy to be so. See what the fruit-buyer's words really come to: In all his dealings with the growers, he had never encountered but one trustworthy man, and he would not be surprised to have even *him* turn out a knave on the first especially favorable opportunity; it was "the way of the world!"

Now the point I wish to make is just this: We ordinarily treat our fellow men as if there were a strong presumption that they would take unfair advantage of us if they could; we know by experience (if the trial has been made) how much easier it is to acquire new faults than to relinquish those we have, while observation clearly teaches that evil communications are far more apt to corrupt good manners than are good manners to over-awe evil communications; and we shall be told every day, on inquiry of the men most experienced in the rough struggle for life, that "it is the way of the world" to assume a cloak of virtue to hide the intention of vice — confirming Herbert Spencer's generalization that in the management of business, "instead of assuming, as people usually do, that things are going right until it is proved that they are going wrong, the proper course is to assume that they are going wrong until it is proved that they are going right."

These facts, established and indisputable, do not entirely cover the ground of the theological doctrine of total depravity; but do they not fur-

nish us, in phenomena of which every student of the human race is bound to take account, a close parallel to that doctrine, which is often overlooked by mystical believers in the "something good" in every depraved and abandoned man?

II

The world wearied long ago, as well it might, of the endless disputes in which many thinkers capable of better work have engaged about free will and foreordination. There is perhaps no more unprofitable task than to endeavor to reconcile in words these two conceptions as harmonious with each other. But let us keep clear of the metaphysics of the case and look at nature.

That man *is free in his choices,* surely few persons outside of jail and bedlam will deny; whoever affirms that he is unable to decide as he pleases on every question of right or wrong doing, may well be suspected, if he speaks seriously, either of fraud or insanity. One may of course persuade himself that he is *too weak to carry out* his purposes, and so may go wrong

while he says he means to go right; but that is quite another matter. It is the decision, the choosing, with which only we are here concerned; and the drunkard of most frequent drunkenness, or the profane person of the most multifarious oaths, while pleading earnestly the tyranny of long established habit as an excuse for his bad practices, will invariably use language that presupposes and admits his unimpaired ability to resolve upon a reformation. "I honestly meant to go right home that night, but I had to pass so many drinking places, and you don't know what struggles I went through before I yielded to the temptation"— what employer, about to discharge a dissipated man, has not heard language like that, in palliation of the last disgraceful debauch? And what employer, or what court of justice, though pitying and at the same time despising the weakness of the culprit who only means and wishes to do right, while persistently in fact doing wrong, will acquit him of responsibility for the results of his vicious courses on the ground that he could not abandon them? The whole structure

of every description of government and discipline, from the family up to the nation, has for its fundamental principle and corner-stone the universally accepted belief that man is morally free.

Yet what feature is more obvious in our daily experience than this — that the most carefully considered course of action is apt to bring about results entirely different from those desired, and that not only one's visible career but even the inner personal life very often shapes itself, so to speak, into forms quite other than those that were intended? "So strangely," writes Macaulay, "do events confound all the plans of man! A prince who read only French, who wrote only French, who ranked as a French classic, became, quite unconsciously, the means of liberating half the Continent from the dominion of that French criticism of which he was himself to the end of his life a slave." The same conception has crystallized itself into a dozen popular proverbs: "man proposes — "; "the best laid plans — "; "there's many a slip "— how familiar, how threadbare, is the

idea! And how few men there are who ever either do or become what they intended! How little is mental development, how little are our tastes and habits, governed in the long run by deliberate purpose; or rather, how often do they grow in directions diametrically opposed to the fixed intention! No man surely who knows anything of himself or of mankind, will compare a human soul to the steamer that plows her way through the billows regardless of wind and current, or even to the ship that may be tossed about this way and that, but finally reaches the port of destination. Rather does it resemble the climbing vine, embodying indeed a principle of growth and of a certain kind of growth, but depending chiefly for its form and its direction upon circumstances lying entirely outside of its own nature. Now the orthodox doctrine asks only a slight extension of these well-known truths. Substitute, for Macaulay's vague term "events," the perfectly clear and intelligible conception of a higher power influencing events, and one sees instantly that the free will of the creature may have its

fullest exercise, while yet the purposes of the Creator are brought to pass.

And in regard to the operation of the higher power and its bearings upon the responsibility of the beings whom, free though they be, that higher power directs and restrains, do we not see every day how a stronger will may control a weaker, without trenching in the smallest degree on its freedom of action? The father of a bright, active boy, devoted to the sports of the field, may have a practically certain prevision that an invitation to go gunning will be joyfully accepted; and his giving the invitation is just as truly the cause of the boy's willing to avail himself of it, as any one event can be the cause of another. The boy's volition to go is absolutely free, and yet is the inevitable result of the father's action. Now suppose a father omniscient and omnipotent, understanding to perfection the disposition of his child, and possessed of every conceivable facility for presenting every kind of motive — what difficulty is there in understanding that he may exercise an unlimited control over the child's actions, while

yet the child is free and must therefore justly be held responsible, both by his own conscience and by every tribunal in the universe, for whatever he does?

It may be thought, however, that there must be a fallacy somewhere in this reasoning; that though we think we see one will perfectly controlled by another, while yet acting with perfect freedom, the two processes are mutually inconsistent and cannot go on together. But it needs no more than an extremely superficial acquaintance with the elements of physical science to exhibit the folly of rejecting either one of two well attested propositions because we cannot make them agree with each other. As Ruskin wisely said: "Very few truths in any science can be fairly stated without such an expression of their opposite sides as looks, to a person who has not grasp of the subject enough to take in both sides at once, like a contradiction." No satisfactory explanation of the phenomena of light can be made, without supposing the existence of a medium which presents the most contradictory and seemingly im-

possible properties. The cosmic ether is infinitely more attenuated than any gas, but yet in many respects bears a much closer resemblance to solid bodies! It is matter, of course, and all matter is supposed to be made up of unchangeable and distinct particles; yet, for many reasons, the ether cannot be thus constituted. And indeed the whole atomic theory — universally accepted as it is, necessary as it seems to be for the scientific statement of scores of classes of phenomena, and almost demonstrated to be true, as it is, by the results of countless experiments in chemistry, is yet, considered as a whole, a bundle of contradictions. From one point of view, it seems to be certain that the atoms of all substances are exactly alike; from another, equally certain that they are intrinsically very different in size, weight and character. There are strong reasons, almost conclusive proof, for believing the atoms to be perfectly hard, mechanically unchangeable; and equally strong reasons for supposing them not only highly elastic but undergoing frequent and most radical transformation.

Yet some of the very investigators who are most busily engaged in developing this atomic theory, would have it believed that only the "scientific" view of any subject is worthy of attention, and that "science" (by which they mean physical science) is always intelligible and self-consistent! Nor will it do to answer that the undulatory theory of light, and the atomic constitution of matter, are only working hypotheses. The simple truth is that all the facts point directly toward light-waves and the existence of atoms, as the only generalizations that can satisfactorily explain them, and that the waves and atoms are therefore believed in, notwithstanding the contradictions in which the thinker immediately finds himself involved beyond hope of extrication. How absurd then, how trivial a complaint it is against the theological doctrines of natural inclination to evil conjoined with moral responsibility, and man's free will conjoined with God's sovereignty, that we do not know how to state them without seeming contradictions! In natural science, dealing with brute matter that can be seen and

handled and weighed and analyzed, we accept any fact for which satisfactory evidence is presented, without caring in the least for our inability to make it agree with other facts equally well attested. Shall we then in spiritual science, where the phenomena to be considered are infinitely more complicated, their laws infinitely more involved, and where our powers of comprehension and reasoning are hardly adequate to even skimming the surface of the great ocean of unknown and perhaps to us unknowable truth — shall we in spiritual science demand that every statement must be seen fully and exactly to square with every other before it can be rationally believed? If the student of natural philosophy, or the chemist, demands that this be done, he at the same time condemns his own methods of procedure as fundamentally erroneous, and their results as the delusive figments of his misguided imagination.

III

In the anxiety which many foolish people display to find cruelty, oppression and injustice in

the primary tenets of the orthodox faith, a forced and unnatural interpretation of the doctrine that the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children, is often insisted on. To the unprejudiced reader, the words of the Second Commandment, whatever may be thought of other passages of Scripture (among which, the 18th chapter of Ezekiel should never be overlooked), convey no hint of the *imputation of sin* or of the descent by inheritance of divine *displeasure;* but merely embody a truth that is simply indisputable. Our scientific friends at all events, who regard every phenomenon of whatever kind as the necessary result of a congeries of indestructible forces acting strictly in accordance with unvarying laws, ought to be the last people in the world to object to the manifest deduction that a child must suffer for his parents' sins. Indeed the fact is too obvious for argument. So far as a just God's judgment upon each man's moral character is concerned, that judgment must be conceived as made up of an inconceivable number of elements, the soul having credit, so to speak, for every dis-

advantage, however trifling, under which it may have labored, and being charged, on the other hand, with every act of willful transgression and with every neglect of opportunity of improvement. In this balancing of accounts, the transgressions of the father must certainly be placed to the credit of the children just so far as they have operated to incline the latter involuntarily toward sin; it were the grossest injustice to expect from the child of a depraved wretch the same clean record that is looked for from the members of a Christian family. But so far as the course of our earthly life is concerned — that also being the resultant of an immense number of conflicting forces — it is manifest that every transgression of any sort of law must put the children of the transgressor at a certain disadvantage for all futurity; physically, mentally, morally, they can never be quite what they might have been had they sprung from a line of sinless progenitors. To put the thing into concrete form, every syphilitic baby is a monument of transgression of physical law committed before its birth. Nobody

imagines that God blames the poor child for its ailments; but the regular operation of divine law will nevertheless inevitably bring upon it a train of untold miseries, as the fruit of its ancestors' folly or sin. The fact is stated to mankind as a motive to abstain from transgression; what stronger motive, to a parent worthy of the name, could the Infinite Father offer?

"But the cruelty involved? the innocent sufferers? You orthodox people will not let us look at the operations of nature as natural. You insist upon it that a personal God acts directly through them all, and acts freely, however regularly. How then, if he is really a loving father, can he bear to bring misery upon innocent children in consequence of transgressions for which they are in no manner responsible?"

Well, the goodness of God is established by another chain of arguments. Remember, please, that many highly unorthodox thinkers profess to find *nothing but beneficence* in nature, and feel perfectly easy in the conclusion that the author of nature is too soft-hearted even to punish sin. "The infinite goodness that I have experienced

in this world," writes Renan, "inspires me with a conviction that at least an equal goodness pervades eternity; and in that I put my trust." But as to the possibility of God's permitting grave evils to light upon the innocent and well-deserving, what do we see every day around us? Surely no one can suppose that *inherited* suffering is the only example of suffering without special corresponding blameworthiness. "The deists have contended," said a well-known and eloquent infidel lecturer, "that the Old Testament is too cruel . . . to be the work of a . . . loving God. To this, the theologians have replied, that nature is just as cruel; that the earthquake, the volcano, the pestilence and storm, are just as savage . . .; and to my mind," he goes on — a remarkable admission — "*this is a perfect answer.*" Thus is orthodoxy supported on diametrically opposite sides by the observations of "freethinkers," one party stoutly maintaining that the Creator certainly loves mankind, while the others insist that the course of natural events is just as cruel and "savage" as any doctrine of revelation.

Each of these opinions is doubtless true; but exaggerate either of them far enough to come into conflict with the tenets of orthodoxy, and it forthwith annihilates the other! — which is just what we should expect, if nature and orthodoxy are from the same hand.

IV

The ancient Jews have no lack of modern sympathizers in demanding a sign from heaven before they will believe. A true revelation from God, it is said, would speak in trumpet tones to every human being; there could be no doubt of its divine origin, and no difference of opinion as to the meaning of the message. Can it be possible, it is asked, that if the Creator desired to impart to man the momentous truth of a future life and the conditions of attaining immortal felicity, he would speak only, or chiefly, in hints and suggestions, communicated at long intervals of time to selected individuals, and preserved for future ages through the instrumentality of fading parchments? Can it be that the possibility of our escaping from eternal

woe depends upon our ability to decipher old manuscripts, written in languages long since disused and well-nigh forgotten? And what, after all, does the so-called revelation reveal? How diverse, how contradictory, are the conclusions drawn by different students of that heterogeneous collection of books called the Bible! How can one be sure of the correctness of any doctrine without thorough investigation for himself — without studying the documents patiently in the original tongues and acquiring considerable knowledge of the historical circumstances of their composition? Yet this, few men can do. Life is short, and its physical necessities demand our first attention. Is it reasonable to suppose that our heavenly Father, if there is such a being, would trust his messages to a channel of communication so extremely precarious? In learning what God desires of us, must we really place so much dependence, not only on the investigations of other men, but even on their mere interpretations and opinions? "A direct revelation to myself, so conveyed that I cannot doubt its celes-

tial origin, so clear that I cannot misconstrue its purport — this I will accept; but as to revelations to other people, centuries ago, with no satisfactory opportunity afforded me to examine their signs of authenticity, and embodying statements that I do not at all understand, together with many things that I am quite unwilling to believe — that is another matter altogether. It is unreasonable to expect me to receive deliverances of this kind at second-hand, and in so confused and uncertain a form besides. No! Let God speak, and I will hear him. But as to records in books of what other men say he has spoken, I have something else to do than to study them; I cannot puzzle my brains over such mystical and enigmatic compositions."

How then is it with nature? It is of a good deal of importance to man — is it not? — to know that poppy-juice will produce sleep, and chloroform insensibility to pain, and nightshade death. It is quite desirable to be aware that smallpox spreads by contagion and may be warded off by the use of bovine virus. It adds considerably to our comfort to be able to smelt

iron ore, and to find coal-beds by the indications of geology. It materially facilitates navigation to discover that the barometer falls before a storm, and that a magnetized needle, swinging free, points always northward. Now has nature proclaimed these truths in a voice which all must hear and none can misunderstand? Are a system of materia medica and a summary of the laws of hygiene written legibly on the surface of our bodies? Are the strata of the rocks plainly labeled, "Here is Iron," "Below is Coal," in characters which the first man as well as the latest could interpret at sight? Are the truths of natural philosophy self-evident without experimentation and reasoning? Do we owe nothing to the researches of those who have gone before us, and is one man's opinion as good as another's, in questions of material science? Nature is a mine wherein are embedded diamonds beyond price. Health, strength, long life, the ability to do and to be, the reputation of a Copernicus or a Newton, the intellectual exhilaration that accompanies important researches and adds the keenest

6542

pleasure to great discoveries — these are the prizes that she offers to the successful explorer of her secret ways. To many persons, such jewels appear to be far more attractive than the promise of a celestial crown. But how one must toil for them! How few, how vague, how easily mistaken, are the indications that visible nature gives us of the positions of her precious nuggets! How often do explorers, though gifted with the sharpest mental vision, go woefully astray and end in ludicrous or miserable disaster! Ages innumerable have elapsed, we are told, since man, with intellectual faculties essentially the same as those he now employs, was developed from the anthropoid apes. Yet it is scarcely seven generations since alchemy became chemistry and some sound knowledge of the constitution of matter began to be acquired. Four centuries have not passed since it was demonstrated that the world moves; and the time is hardly yet arrived for the mass of mankind to grasp the rationale of the changes in the appearance of the moon and to understand that her phases have no relation to

terrestrial events. How little, even yet, do we know of physiology and minute anatomy! Who can tell us the cause of neuralgia, the peculiarities of action of a diseased nerve? Why, it is not yet three hundred years since the very elementary discovery was made that the arteries carry blood! How slowly and painfully have we acquired the mere smattering of knowledge that we now possess as to the universe at large and even as to the mechanism of our own bodies! How then can it consistently be expected that the God of nature should proclaim aloud, in clear and unmistakable tones, the attributes of his own being, the existence of a future life for man, and the conditions of attaining felicity beyond the grave? Not thus does he smooth the path for our feet in seeking the knowledge that we most need for the amelioration of our earthly life. One position is believed to be impregnable: The truths that absolutely must be believed, and the duties that absolutely must be done, in order to escape the divine wrath with which his conscience threatens every sinner, are revealed so plainly in the

Scriptures, and sanctioned so unmistakably by the reason and the conscience, that the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err — just as the elementary fact that our physical systems require food and drink and sleep, is taught us by nature without our seeking. But as one who would make any progress in physical life must bestir himself to learn other things than these, so must he who desires to attain any considerable knowledge of the spiritual world, or any purely intellectual grasp of the evidence that the Scriptures really did come from God, search for it with painstaking diligence, availing himself wherever he can of the investigations of others, and never absolutely certain that on many points he is not more or less in error. It has been well said that the Bible contains a system of divinity in much the same sense as that in which a system of geology lies enfolded in the rocks. If the author of the one is the same being as the maker of the other, ought not such similarity of plan to be confidently expected, rather than seized upon as a ground for maintaining that while the rocks were certainly not

constructed by human agency, the Scriptures were?

V

The doctrine that many agreeable and perhaps useful persons are lost, while some very unpleasant people are finally saved, is often regarded as a hard saying — who can hear it? But has the objection any better basis than mere confusion of thought? To clear the ground of extraneous matter, let it first be distinctly admitted that the man who cares not at all to be of service to his fellows, and who makes no effort to correct his own infirmities of temper and disposition, deceives himself greatly if he imagines that he enjoys the favor of God, depending for salvation upon his intellectual belief or his emotional experiences. Let it be further admitted — what is the mere dictum of common sense — that the benevolent and kindly soul must fare better in the next world, other things being equal, than the selfish or malicious transgressor. But this being fully understood, the great fact remains that if there is a personal

God, the obligations resting upon every human being as a moral agent divide themselves into two classes, duties toward the Creator and duties toward man; and that even the absolutely perfect discharge of one of these sets of duties, were that possible, can furnish no excuse for the neglect of the other. That is to say, the most benevolent and useful man on earth, if he lead a godless life, never thanking his Creator for his goodness, never perhaps giving himself seriously to the consideration of the question whether the Creator has demands upon his attention or has made a revelation of his will to mankind, should not be surprised at finding an appalling indictment lodged against him at the great assize on charges entirely unconnected with his demeanor toward his fellowmen, whatever that demeanor may have been.

A similar principle appears plainly enough in human transactions, and is universally recognized. An undutiful son, detected in an act of base ingratitude and disrespect toward his father, will hardly be allowed to plead, in extenuation of his fault, that he treats his own

children kindly. A defaulting bank cashier would be considered silly as well as dishonest should he expect the directors to overlook his crime because of his scrupulous observance of all the commandments except the eighth. A careless railroad engineer, on trial for manslaughter in having recklessly brought about a terrible disaster, will scarcely undertake to defend himself by showing that he always pays his debts and keeps the machinery bright. In each case, the virtues referred to may be rightly claimed as his own by the culprit; but that fact is entirely irrelevant to the matter in hand, and would be so considered even by the illogical sentimentalists who imagine that

> " Christ ain't a-going to be too hard
> On a man that died for men,"

however irreligious or grossly immoral may have been that man's whole life.

There is another way of looking at the question. The orthodox faith holds that the Savior's atonement is offered to mankind both as a cure for the injuries inflicted by sin upon

our moral nature and as a protection from terrible evils yet to come. How is it with wounds and ailments in our bodies? A bone of the leg is broken; will any degree of general health, or any perfection of muscular development, enable the patient to walk while that fracture is unrepaired? A man has taken a poison for which there is an effective antidote. How much will you accomplish by merely placing him in a luxurious bed and supplying him with nutritious food and refreshing drinks? Nature cares nothing for the fine physique in the one case or the favorable environment in the other. *The needed corrective must be applied,* or the activity of the body is ended. There is no possible escape from the alternative.

And how is it in regard to protection from the terrible wheels of the material universe that will crush us remorselessly if we willfully or ignorantly fall in their way? We live in the midst of dangers, from which indeed we are liberally provided with the means of escape, but which will brook no trifling. It is a winter evening while I write. Outside my windows

blows a whistling storm of fine dry snow that cuts and sears like fire, and the mercury has been for hours near zero. Inside, there is warmth and safety and comfort. Coal burns, and gives me heat. Brick walls, heavy doors, double windows, a tight roof, defy the tempest. But suppose I fail to take advantage of the shelter. Suppose I go forth, scantily clothed, into the open fields. What pity can I expect from nature? — that same beneficent nature that offers me, in such lavish profusion, coal for fuel, and wood for timbers, and clay for bricks, and sand and lime for glass. She will ask no questions, but summarily destroy me for my foolhardy presumption. The principle is everywhere and always the same; not one single transgression of the thousand regulations that nature has prescribed for our life will be forgiven or overlooked in consideration of our scrupulously observing the nine hundred and ninety-nine. Each infraction, however trifling, is surely punished; and if one offends on a vital point, there can be no result but certain death. *Beneficence,* provision for our wants, is every-

where; *mercy,* the overlooking of transgression, is nowhere to be discerned.

It surely therefore must be from some source very different from the study of nature that men have drawn the conclusion that they can expect the God of nature to pardon their neglect of himself, on the ground that they have been useful and agreeable to their fellow-men — which is exactly equivalent to pardoning the infraction of one law because another has been fulfilled!

VI

And in respect to the endless duration of the punishment. It has been said, in high-sounding phrase, that it must be impossible for a finite being to commit against the Infinite any sin deserving eternal suffering. That may be true; the proposition is of such a nature as hardly to admit of satisfactory discussion. But surely it is quite too mechanical and limited a conception of the world of woe to think of it as a torture chamber wherein pain is deliberately inflicted by higher powers in execution of a judicial sentence — so much sin on earth, so much the

wretchedness of expiation beyond. What the Scriptures tell us is that such persons as deliberately reject in this life the means of salvation, pass at death into an estate of misery. They do *not* tell us that further sin is impossible. Blessed be God, they do not positively and in set form proclaim that repentance is impossible either; the door of hope is not absolutely and certainly, beyond all question or doubt, closed at the portals of the grave. But how is it about sinning and repenting here? Can any truth be more manifest than that the probability of a transgressor's forsaking his evil ways diminishes with a fearful ratio as he goes on in years and in wickedness? The principle of inertia, in progressive motion as well as in rest, is to be discerned just as plainly, by those who care to look for it, in spiritual as in physical movement. On what other principle do our laws act, in distinguishing so sharply between the first transgressions of youth, heinous though they may be, and the misdeeds (perhaps less black in themselves) of old offenders, and in making of juvenile delinquents a class by them-

selves? The young lawbreaker *may* be saved, and we send him to a reformatory; the hardened malefactor of mature years, there is no hope for him — let him go to a prison, and the longer the better!

Now what reason can analogy suggest for the belief of our Universalist brethren and the "free-thinkers" who outdo them, that this downward motion of the soul is to meet with a check at the grave or beyond it? A cannon-ball is shot out into space — when will its motion cease? A child's spine grows crooked for a dozen years — when will it begin to straighten? A little aneurism forms on the aorta — when will the artery consolidate itself into its normal dimensions? A man acquires habits of falsehood and dishonesty, and they grow upon him for fifty years — when will he probably cast them off? A rational creature of God passes his whole life, so far as we can see it, in entire neglect of his Creator — when will he begin to reverence the Eternal Purity? Let death come soon or late; death is only the crumbling back of the corporeal organs to their

elements; why should the steady progression of the *spirit* toward evil, that we have watched for thirty, or fifty, or eighty years, be even retarded by its freedom from physical restraints? Does not the analogy of all things here suggest rather an accelerated movement, accelerated with ever increasing velocity, in the same line as before? If there is one solemn lesson that the observation of nature forces more than another upon the attention of the observer, it is surely this: Processes of deterioration, once well established, generally end only when there is no more material to work upon. The mold propagates itself in all directions; the rust increases; the ulcer spreads; the gangrene advances toward vital parts; the dishonest boy, unrestrained, makes a dangerous man; the liar at fifteen, unless some powerful influence of good transforms his moral nature, is a defaulter at twenty-five; the man of occasional excesses in middle life becomes a confirmed sot in later years. *Facilis,* ever *facilis,* is the *descensus Averni;* and if sin brings suffering now, why not a century from now? Why not a million

centuries? An immortal soul, eternally going wrong — why not eternally suffering the penalty?

If now the points of resemblance that have been suggested between the system of belief that is called "orthodoxy" on the one hand and the constitution of nature on the other, are justified by correct observation, one of two conclusions would seem certain. If it be maintained that orthodoxy is like nature because it has been developed from the study of nature, the deduction must instantly follow that its doctrines are probably sound. It is one of the lamentable infirmities of thinking very apt to result from that exclusive attention to material things which now-a-days so often usurps to itself the name of "science," that many great investigators of this lower realm of phenomena are prone to fail to recognize, and therefore prone to reject, their own methods when applied to higher objects of thought. They work by analogy without scruple in determining the probable condition of affairs on the planet

Jupiter, or the mode of life of the palæozoic fauna; and they deride analogy as the ignis fatuus of imaginative dreamers, the moment you apply it to the study of our spiritual nature! A thinker of broader intellect can hardly fail to perceive that careful and well-based deductions from what happens here and now, in the psychological no less than in the material universe, are extremely likely to prove trustworthy guides in regard to the events of all the future.

But in point of fact, we know very well that no system of sacred philosophy was ever developed, in large degree or in small, from the study of nature. Theologians have been men of the closet, not of the laboratory, the field or the market-place. Taking as a basis the sketchy outline furnished by the writers of the Scriptures, they have applied to it the methods of ordinary logic, often going wrong, no doubt, but successively correcting each other's results, till the comprehensive system on which, in every essential point, all evangelical churches are agreed, has gradually assumed its present form and dimensions, including no small number of

points of unlooked-for similarity to the manifest operations of nature. *Whence came the original outline?*—involving as it does so much that man would never have either expected or desired, so much that is mysterious if not incomprehensible, so much that is not only seemingly inconsistent and irreconcilable with itself, but in conflict with human reason as well — and withal, so much that on close inspection reminds us of similar processes and similar riddles in the world of every-day phenomena all around us.

The simple, natural, almost unavoidable conclusion would seem to be this — that the First Cause of nature (say "God" or not, as you please) must have been in some manner the inspirer of the teachings of the Bible in regard to our relations with the Creator, our duties and our future — the author, that is to say, of the great conceptions and beliefs that lie at the foundation of the orthodox faith. If a more probable hypothesis can be framed, better accounting for all the facts, neither materialist nor agnostic has yet told us what it is.

CHRISTIANITY AND OTHER RELIGIONS

A SENTENCE in the preface to this little book may bear amplification. I certainly do not myself believe that a sane man, rejecting the evidence that Christianity is from the Creator, could accept any other religion as divine. But there is a view of the case that deserves respectful consideration, the opinion that the essential features of Christianity are divinely inspired undoubtedly, but only in the same sense as are the essential features of other faiths. To inquire how far this belief is supported by established facts is the same as to inquire whether it is a scientific doctrine. Does it appear that the Creator has revealed Himself at sundry times and in divers manners to many other nations as well as to the Jews?

For one, I certainly would not answer no. Very large parts of the best non-Jewish the-

ology of ancient times are avowedly conjecture only, just the sort of conjecture that we should expect from elevated minds if man really has a Maker and bears to him anything like a filial relation. Such is manifestly the theology of Cicero among the Latins and Plato among the Greeks. It may have been based on a certain degree of subtle inspiration, inspiration just as genuine, so far as it went, as was vouchsafed to the writer of any book in the Bible. This inspiration did not go far, however; and its teachings were never so promulgated as to exercise any influence worth mentioning on the belief or the character of the people at large. It was a sort of dilettante philosophizing, bearing none of the marks that we feel ought to and must attest a true and sufficient revelation from the Eternal.

But it does not seem easy to dispose of all the high spiritual insight of the "heathen" world by the simple expedient of calling it a guess. The facts do not look that way. Consider for instance the tremendous solidity of the belief in immortality that prevailed among

the ancient Egyptians and so worked itself out in constant practical application as abundantly to justify Herodotus in saying of these people, as Paul afterwards said of the Athenians, that they were exceedingly religious. There was no need to admonish them that the present life is a vapor, appearing for a little time and then vanishing away; they understood that perfectly, and seem to have lived far more, in a sense, in the next world than in this, devoting to the preparation for eternity a proportion of time and effort that shames the most enlightened nations of the world to-day. Much of their method seems perhaps laughable to us, though it may better be thought of as deeply pathetic, — their strenuous endeavors for the preservation of the bodies of the dead, and their childish provision for the supposed material necessities of post-mortem existence. But their view of the hereafter was not all superstitious folly; far from it. The picture of the last judgment drawn in their great religious treatise, the "Book of the Dead," a composition of unknown antiquity but certainly far antedating

the twenty-fifth century before Christ, is in all its main outlines as strong and masterly as words could paint. The deceased soul is brought before Osiris, who represents mercy and love above all things but nevertheless renders justice, and who is aided by forty-two assessors, each charged with the duty of inquiring about one of the listed sins of the Egyptian catalog, exactly such transgressions, for the most part, as would be denounced to-day. They include blasphemy, deceit, theft, murder, adultery, cruelty, disorderly conduct, idleness, drunkenness, injustice, excessive talkativeness, indiscreet curiosity, slander, envy, false accusation, keeping milk from the mouths of sucklings, abusing slaves, defiling the river, diverting water during the inundation, taking the clothes of the dead, and several kinds of commercial dishonesty, covering specifically every sort of cheating by false weights and measures. Nor is this all. The candidate for happy immortality must prove the exercise of positive as well as of negative virtue. It must be shown that he has given bread to the hungry,

water to the thirsty, clothing to the naked, a boat to the shipwrecked mariner, and in general that he has made it his delight to do what men command and the gods approve. Nor is this all. His heart must be fundamentally right; and it is weighed with much solemnity, on scales carefully tested in his presence immediately before the trial. Actions, motives, and even the underlying character, all come into painstaking review. What more can we imagine of a final judgment in truth and righteousness?

Egyptian mythology, moreover, for all its imaginary pantheon of nondescript creatures, some wholly bestial, some half human but with heads of animals and birds, seems to have been distinctly monotheistic at bottom, the priestly order, and probably the more intelligent classes of laymen, understanding perfectly that the many gods were really only appearances of the One Supreme Being of whose existence they were quite as sure as are we. There is no trace of idolatry in their worship, not even of the subtle form in which the devotee, bow-

ing down before a graven image, is supposed to venerate, not the image itself, but the unseen divinity that the image represents. The most ancient documents discovered speak repeatedly of "the only true living God," "who has made all things but has not Himself been made," a being never represented in Egyptian sculpture or painting, and to whom no name is given. Undoubtedly this article of their creed was largely esoteric, not grasped at all by the common people in their devout worship of the individual gods and goddesses, and overlaid probably, even in the minds of the learned, by a mass of superstition. Also it must be admitted that we find among their pictorial representations of the divine powers of nature some figures of such gross obscenity that I think no book portrays or even describes them, certainly no book intended for general circulation — one must see them on the walls of the tombs to learn what they are. Nevertheless and for all that, it would certainly seem to savor of unscientific rashness to deny the possibility of there having been a real divine revela-

tion to the minds of those astonishing Africans who erected, long before the dawn of authentic history, a great number of such enormous temples as amaze the beholder to-day, to say nothing of their constructing, for a purpose closely allied to religion, by far the largest and most massive building on earth, a building that is believed to have been thousands of years old when Abraham was born.

So also with the great religions of India, and possibly with those of other countries that have made smaller or less permanent impression on the thinking of the world. Under the revolting cover of disgusting vice and almost unimaginable folly that makes most of these faiths the synonym, in many minds, for every form of evil, there does generally seem to be discernible, on research, a certain qualified form of monotheism not different in essential substance from that of the Hebrew Scriptures, together with some broken or inchoate elements of a moral law that would have been approved by Moses or Nehemiah. We read such sentences as these in the ancient books of the East:

"The true name is God, without fear, without enmity, the Being without death, the Giver of salvation." "One self-existent, Himself the Creator, one continueth; another never was and never will be." "Meditate upon Him in whose hands are life and death." "Let faith in God characterize all your thoughts, words and actions." "If you call upon God, you will be able to subdue your imperfections, and the evil inclinations of your mind will depart from you; but they will return, when you cease to call upon Him."

Similar glimmerings of the great truths of the Jewish-Christian Scriptures may be found, no doubt, in the religious literature of many other lands. They may have been guesses; they may have been inspired. Be that as it may, the differences between these faiths and that of the Bible are evidently immeasurably great. You will hardly find in any of them the doctrine of divine pardon for sin on repentance and reformation without some form of painfully working out an atonement; and you will miss other material features of the

Christian revelation. It is only in their very highest and on the whole exceptional characteristics that these faiths bear any resemblance to Christianity; and their practical outworking among the people is in a direction exactly the opposite of hers, resulting in polytheism, generally in idolatry, and very often, certainly in India through all the ages, in a horrible condition of society and the degradation of religious ceremonies to the practice of unbridled vice. By their fruits ye shall know them.

Remains for consideration, however, one system of thought that has emerged from the darkness of the native faiths of India, being indeed claimed to be the mother of them all, and has spread widely over the earth in recent years, winning more adherents or at least students than one would suppose without investigation. This is what is now known as Theosophy, though it differs widely from some of the ancient applications of that name. It may contain fundamental truth directly inspired by the Divinity. Whether it does or not, is immaterial for present purposes, because Theosophy

cannot accurately be described as a religion. A Theosophist may be a Buddhist, a Roman Catholic, a Quaker. As a highly devout and highly intellectual follower of the cult, who is at the same time a member in good and regular standing of the Congregational church, has written: "Theosophy is more a wisdom built upon former conceptions than an original first-principle religion. It does not teach dogmatic theology or hold hard and fast beliefs, except that one must believe in and lead the life of universal brotherhood to be a Theosophist. I have given it much thought and study for twenty-five years, and find nothing in it to conflict with Christ's teachings. Most Theosophists think of the God of Christ as in-dwelling, the light within —'the kingdom of God is within you,' and God must dwell in his kingdom; but to me this does not conflict with a conception of a Great Intelligence, a Compassionate One who answers prayer and to whom it is worth while to appeal." No comparison is therefore to be drawn between the supposed inspiration of Theosophy and the supposed in-

spiration of Christianity, for there is no necessary conflict between the two. Rather is there, in many respects, a striking similarity. The inner Theosophical life begins with a change much like Christian conversion, the entering upon a mystical Path that leads through Gates of Gold and beyond them into a region where man is on the threshold of becoming more than man. This change demands a resolute and irrevocable turning of the soul from all sin that soils it, toward the pure light of goodness, and most especially and above all things from every form of selfishness; the pupil must not even wish to tread the Path because it will bring him to blessedness, but only because it is right for him to walk there; and he is earnestly warned that he must pass through much mental distress before making great progress. Bunyan and the Slough of Despond come instantly to mind, here and in the sketchy outlines that are given of what will be experienced further on. A very great proportion of Theosophical doctrine, especially in its practical applications to daily life, might be adopted verbatim by

any Christian church, and one may well believe that it is in some sense divinely inspired, without either subscribing to or positively rejecting the many features which differentiate it as a system of philosophy from what can properly be called a religion.

It seems therefore to the writer of these pages that Christianity is preëminently *the* religion of the world, the only system of religious belief for which unqualified and continuous divine authority can reasonably be claimed. And with all that is said to the contrary, its fruits thus far gathered appear to him to justify the belief that it will ultimately receive universal acceptance. These fruits are known of all men. Paint the vice of the so-called Christian countries as black as you will, it remains true that in them are millions of almost ideal homes, made so most distinctly by the teachings of Christianity, and millions of men and women who are honestly endeavoring to lead the sort of life that Christianity inculcates. And the progress of Christianity toward universal acceptance is not really quite as slow as some

people would have us believe. About one-third of the population of the world may now be computed as accepting it or professing, though perhaps rather languidly, to accept it; and there are said to be seventeen million enrolled Christians in non-christian lands. That may not seem a large result after two thousand years; but the rate of gain is accelerating. In China, it took a century to make the first million converts; twelve years for the second million; less than six years for the third. And then, if man has really been on the earth for quarter of the immensely long period now alleged by palæontological science, what is a couple of millenniums?

Two great difficulties in the way of believing in the ultimate universality of the acceptance of Christianity come, of course, instantly to mind — the bewildering diversity of discordant sects into which the church is cut up, and the apparent loss of general influence by the authorities of perhaps all denominations, in recent years. A distinguished publicist and very practical man of affairs, Henry Watterson, said

recently in a public address: "The pulpit remains therefore still the moral hope of the universe and the spiritual light of mankind." That depends on the meaning that is to be attached to the word "pulpit." The power of the present pulpit, just as now constituted, over public opinion and practice in the so-called Christian countries, is a mere fraction, we are generally told, of what it was; and people do not attend worship in anything like the proportion that prevailed a generation ago; whatever the church may be gaining abroad, it is losing more at home in the rapid diminution, in the lands in which it has been longest established, of its sway over the thought and the lives of men. Personally, I think these statements are not without foundation; and it appears to me that the regretted change shows every sign of being steadily progressive; novelties of method in the churches, the introduction of popular social features and the like, seem to effect little or nothing in the way of checking it. But it is essential to remember that "the church" and "Christianity" are not nec-

essarily interconvertible terms; Christianity may be immensely strengthened by such a transformation of all present church organizations as shall amount practically to their utter destruction, and the evolution of something entirely different. Can we not even now perceive some indications of such an evolutionary process? Are not the minds of most thoughtful persons preparing for it? Instead of the former uncompromising adherence to elaborate and rigid creeds down to most unessential particulars, it seems to me that a very hopeful proportion of religious people are coming more and more to separate the articles of their faith, almost unconsciously perhaps, but still effectively, into four classes. They recognize, first, that a great many questions formerly the subject of heated debate can never be definitely settled, and are of about as much importance as the tints in the coat that Jacob gave to Joseph; you don't know what they were, you can't find out, and nobody need care. Then secondly, there are many tenets, not quite so trifling but certainly not vital, about which they

hold their judgment in suspense; they have never decided on them, and they let them rest until perhaps they shall see more light. Thirdly, there are points of doctrine that appear to them to be clear, but about which they see no necessity of discussion, realizing that other people, just as good Christians as themselves, may view them very differently, and not without some reason; such for instance are several of the doctrines referred to in the chapter immediately preceding this, doctrines that seem to millions of thoughtful people to be securely established, but about which they have no quarrel with any one who rejects them. The irreducible minimum that remains, the creed that must be accepted if one believes in any form of Christianity, is far smaller, surely, than formerly it was thought to be, leaving a neutral zone that gives common ground for far greater variety of opinion than it would have been supposed able to accommodate, a century ago. Let it be noted that the broader modern view is distinctly scientific, being precisely the view that real students of physical science always

take in their specialties. There are many trifling possibilities about which they do not concern themselves at all; many suppositions about which they have not reached final decision; many that they think are well established but would by no means cling to pertinaciously should real objection be brought up; many that they regard as so positively settled that if anybody doubts them he only displays ignorance. The adoption, in the highest of all the sciences, of a mental attitude long recognized as necessary to real progress in investigating the phenomena of physical matter and force, is a most promising augury, it seems to me, for final agreement on the essentials, very nearly as peaceful as that which prevails concerning the operation of gravitation or the rotation of the planets.

This great gain in our habits of thought is manifesting itself in the perfectly patent fact that the division lines between the different categories of religious belief are far less rigidly drawn than formerly. Roman Catholics no longer class all "heretics" with atheists and

the heathen; members of the so-called "Evangelical" communions no longer regard, on the one side, all Romanists as idolaters or, on the other side, all Unitarians as awful blasphemers, sure of final damnation; Unitarians fraternize in many ways with Trinitarians on one hand and with Jews on the other. Three very important denominations in Canada — the Presbyterian, the Congregational and the Methodist — which differ widely in their plans of organization and polity, as well as in many points of doctrine formerly regarded as of almost vital importance, have not only abolished the divisions which cut up each of them (as they are still cut up in the United States) into a number of sub-denominations, but have definitely agreed to merge all the three great churches into a single organic body standing for the essentials on which all agree, and waiving insistence on the minor points formerly too much emphasized by each of them. There has been organized also in the Anglican church of the Dominion a "Church Unity League" the members of which disavow the notion, still

generally held in the Episcopal communion everywhere, that only ordination by an Episcopal bishop can really make a man a Protestant clergyman. The alarm at this tendency not infrequently displayed by sectarian teachers of the extreme type, who identify with religion the peculiar tenets of their special faith, and look upon the threatened modification of the latter as equivalent to the destruction of the former,— this very display of alarm indicates the increasing strength of the movement toward some sort of unity, vague as are at present our efforts to feel after it and find it. There are dark clouds on the horizon? Yes; is there not also dawn, the promise of day? The necessity of far-reaching re-arrangement is not of itself alarming. It is hardly to be conceived as possible that any changes in the future in the organization and the forms of worship called Christian can mark differences with the present status wider than the differences that now prevail between say the Roman Church and the Society of Friends; and if Christianity can endure such striking varia-

tions contemporaneously, it does not appear that her vitality will be threatened by differences of no greater importance coming in succession. Do not the established facts of history and the zeitgeist of the present day suggest strongly the gradual development of a distinctly Christian brotherhood that shall more and more perceive and propagate to universal dominion among mankind the great principles on which all churches rest, and more and more free itself of every impediment in the way of man-made additions to the Christianity of Christ?

We have far fewer, or at any rate far less vociferous, professional infidels now than formerly; and the positive atheist, seizing every occasion to propagate his views, seems to have become an almost extinct species. Still, there are some of both classes left; and to them may perhaps be commended not inappropriately the admonition of Gamaliel: "Refrain; if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to naught; if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God."

ARTI et VERITATI